

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ADDIS 06519 220823Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-08 COME-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00
PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 PRS-01 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /068 W
-----080051 221257Z /53

R 220544Z NOV 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6343
INFO AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY BONN

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 6519

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ETRN ENGR ET
SUBJ: ETHIOPIA'S TRANSPORT SITUATION

REF: ADDIS ABABA 5755

1. ACCORDING TO SOURCES IN THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY, THE
TRANSPORTATION BOTTLENECK WHICH HAS PLAGUED THE EPMG
SINCE THE DJIBOUTI RAILROAD WAS CUT IN JUNE, IS NOW
BEING OVERCOME. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE WITH
REGARD TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS,
AND IS DUE TO THE ARRIVAL IN ASSAB EARLIER IN
NOVEMBER OF 70 FIAT FUEL TANKERS (APPROX.
CAPACITY 13,000 LITERS), EACH WITH TRAILER (APPROX.
CAPACITY 13,000 LITERS). AN ADDITIONAL 30 LARGE
MERCEDES FUEL TANKERS ARE EXPECTED IN ASSAB LATER

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THIS MONTH, AND 20 FUEL TANKERS REPORTEDLY
ARE BEING OBTAINED FROM KENYA. SUDDENLY GOING
FROM RAGS TO RICHES, AUTHORITIES NOW ARE CONSIDERING
TAKING SOME OF THE OLDEST, MOST DECREPIT TANKERS
OUT OF SERVICE.

2. PETROLEUM STORAGE TANKS IN ADDIS ABABA AND

THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING TOPPED UP, AND INDUSTRY SOURCES ANTICIPATE NO DIFFICULTY IN KEEPING THEM TOPPED UP AS LONG AS THE ASSAB-ADDIS ABABA ROAD REMAINS SECURE.

3. CONTRIBUTING TO THE IMPROVED DISTRIBUTION OF PETROLEUM AND OTHER PRODUCTS AND GOODS, IS A MORE EFFICIENT SYSTEM OF TRANSPORTATION. DECIDING THAT THE LARGE-SCALE CONVOY SYSTEM BETWEEN ASSAB AND ADDIS ABABA WAS TOO SLOW, THE EPMG BEGAN EARLY IN NOVEMBER TO ALLOW INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUPS OF TRUCKS TO SET THEIR OWN DEPARTURE TIMES AND PACE. AT THE SAME TIME THEY ESTABLISHED CHECKPOINTS ON THE ROUTE, WITH MILITARY PATROLS PLYING BETWEEN THE CHECKPOINTS. THIS NEW SYSTEM HAS REDUCED TURN AROUND TIME AND CONSEQUENTLY INCREASED THE FLOW OF GOODS OUT OF ASSAB.

4. WHILE AUTHORITIES ARE SATISFIED WITH PROGRESS IN IMPROVING THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, THEY REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT THE SECURITY OF THE VITAL ASSAB-ADDIS ABABA ROAD. SHOULD THIS ROAD, LIKE THE MASSAWA-ASMARA ROAD, BE CUT, LIMITED STORAGE FACILITIES, ESPECIALLY FOR FUEL, WOULD CAUSE THE SITUATION TO DETERIORATE RAPIDLY.

MATHERON

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